Assistance from USO Fund to improve teledensity in rural areas

100. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to an estimate from TRAI, to cover 70-80 per cent of rural population, about 15,000 base stations are required by each operator;

(b) if so, whether TRAI has recommended for giving assistance from the Universal Service Obligation Fund, which helps in reaching remote villages where telephone has become a distant dream and also achieving the Teledensity Target of 4 per cent by the year 2010;

(c) whether it is possible that the operators can be convinced to share passive infrastructure;

(d) if so, whether any effort has been made in this direction by his Ministry; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) As per recommendations of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on "Growth of Telecom Services in Rural India", about 20,000 base stations will be required to cover around 80 to 90% of the rural population.

(b) to (d) Yes, Sir.

(e) Wide ranging consultations have been held with Access Service Providers, Infrastructure Providers, Association of Telecom Service Providers and Manufacturers to work out modalities for sharing of certain elements of infrastructure and to provide support from Universal Service Obligation Fund for the same. Elements of infrastructure which can be shared include land, tower, shelter etc.

FDI norms for telecom sector

101. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that FDI norms for telecom industry are being reviewed;